

**Notification of Funding Opportunity**  
**Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)**  
**2005-2006**

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**Commissioner of Education**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**P.O. Box 500**  
**Trenton, NJ 08625-0500**

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**Contact Number: (609) 777-2074**

**Proposal Due Date: May 11, 2005**

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/>

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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		PAGE
<b>I.</b>	<b>PROGRAM INFORMATION</b>	
	1.1 Description of the Program	1
	1.2 Eligibility to Apply	1
	1.3 Statutory/Regulatory Source and Funding	2
	1.4 Dissemination of This Notice	2
	1.5 Technical Assistance	2
	1.6 Proposal Submission	3
	1.7 Reporting	3
	1.8 Disbursement of Funds	4
<b>II.</b>	<b>PROJECT GUIDELINES</b>	
	2.1 Project Requirements	4
	2.2 Cost Proposal	6
<b>III.</b>	<b>COMPLETING THE APPLICATION</b>	7
<b>IV.</b>	<b>AWARD SELECTION</b>	
	4.1 Distribution of Awards	7
	4.2 Proposal Review	8

## I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

### 1.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding notification is to announce the availability of funds for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) to increase access to preschool for four year olds. The classes will be comprised of children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children supported through other means. Districts already receiving Early Childhood Program Aid, with the exclusion of Abbott districts, are eligible for funding to increase from half day to full day programs.

**Early Launch to Learning Initiative FY05**  
*(pending budget approval)*

Cost of low income children:	\$4,000,000
Districts Eligible:	474 (All non-Abbott districts, ECPA districts could increase to full-day)
Anticipated Districts Funded:	25 - 55
Anticipated Range of Awards:	\$25,000 - \$700,000

### 1.2 ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

Districts with the following characteristics are eligible to apply:

- Districts that received ELLI funding during 2004-2005 (These districts must submit revised plans and budgets. If they meet all program requirements, they receive priority for funding.)
- Districts that currently serve elementary aged children.
- Districts that already offer preschool for children without disabilities may apply to expand their current program to serve more children or to offer longer hours.
- Early Childhood Program Aid districts that do not expend ECPA funding on 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade are eligible to apply to expand their program to full day.

Abbott districts are not eligible for this funding.

To be eligible for this award, districts **must** send the preschool coordinator, the head of curriculum and instruction or the equivalent person to a Technical Assistance meeting on April 7, 2005. In addition, districts that **have not previously received** ELLI funding must send an appropriate representative to a Curriculum Showcase which will be held on April 20, 2005. The district representative must pre-register by April 4, 2005 for the appropriate meeting. Districts that have not applied before will attend the 10:30 AM Technical Assistance meeting and the Curriculum Showcase. Districts that have applied in the past will attend the 9:30 Technical

Assistance meeting and will be invited to attend the other meetings if they so choose. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by March 24, 2005.

### 1.3 STATUTORY/REGULATORY SOURCE AND FUNDING

The application and implementation of the program must be in conformance with all applicable state and federal regulations. **The resources that support this discretionary state aid are subject to appropriation in the FY06 Appropriations Act.**

A total of \$4,000,000 is in the proposed budget for this program in FY 2006. The Department of Education anticipates funding between 25-55 districts with average awards of \$25,000 to \$700,000 depending upon the applicant's projected enrollment of low income children.

### 1.4 DISSEMINATION OF THIS NOTICE

The Department of Education, through the Office of the Early Childhood Education, made notice of the award opportunity available to eligible districts in the State of New Jersey, as described in Section 1.2, Eligibility to Apply. Superintendents, Chief School Administrators, and Department of Education county superintendents and assistant commissioners also received notification of availability of these funds via correspondence dated March 18, 2005.

Copies of this Notification of Funding Opportunity and Forms are available on the NJDOE web site <http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/> or by contacting the Office of Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education by telephone (609) 777-2074; or by fax at (609) 777-0967.

### 1.5 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Attendance at the Technical Assistance meetings is a requirement for application for ELLI funding. The preschool coordinator, the head of curriculum and instruction or the equivalent person from the applicant district **must** pre-register by April 4, 2005 for the appropriate Technical Assistance meetings. Each district may send more than one representative **if and only if** they also pre-register.

Districts that **have not applied before** must attend the 10:30 AM Technical Assistance meeting on April 7, 2005 at the NJ Department of Education at 100 Riverview Plaza, Trenton **AND** the Curriculum Showcase on April 20, 2005, 9:00 – 3:30, at the Ramada Inn at 399 Monmouth Street, East Windsor 08520 (call 609-448-7000 for directions). The Curriculum Showcase is an additional technical assistance meeting that will provide information about evidence-based early childhood curricula to enable each district to make appropriate selections.

Districts that **have received ELLI** funding in the past **must** attend the 9:30 AM Technical Assistance meeting on April 7, 2005 at the DOE at 100 Riverview Plaza, Trenton and will be

invited to attend the other meetings if they so choose. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by March 24, 2005.

## **1.6 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

The Department of Education ***will not accept a late proposal***. The responsibility for a timely submission resides with the applicant. The Application Control Center (ACC) must receive an original and four copies of the complete proposal **NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M. ON May 11, 2005. Without exception**, the ACC will not accept a proposal received after this deadline. The applicant agency will not be eligible for an award if the proposal is received after the due date.

The original and four (4) copies of the proposal along with a PC formatted computer disk containing the proposal must be mailed or delivered to:

### **Application Control Center**

New Jersey Department of Education  
River View Executive Plaza, Building 100  
P.O. Box 500  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500

To ensure timely delivery and receipt of the proposal, the applicant is encouraged either to:

- hand deliver the proposal to the address above which is located next to Mercer County Waterfront Park on Route 29 in Trenton, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (excluding state holidays) and obtain a dated receipt; or
- send the proposal by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested; or
- arrange for delivery by an overnight delivery service.

Postmarks are not acceptable evidence of timely submission. Receipt by the due date and time is required. The applicant is encouraged to obtain a receipt or signature upon delivery to verify NJDOE receipt. Complete proposals are those that include all elements listed in Section 3.2, Proposal Component Checklist of this notice. The proposal received by the due date and time will be screened to determine whether it is, in fact, eligible for evaluation. The NJDOE reserves the right to reject any proposal not in conformance with the requirements of this program application.

**Proposals submitted by fax can not be accepted in any circumstances.**

## **1.7 REPORTING**

Reports on program implementation and fiscal accounting will be required in a format that will be available at the time of award. An interim report will be due on January 15, 2006 and a final report on July 15, 2006.

## **1.8 DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS**

Award funds will be disbursed in 10 payments of 10% of total award per month. Supplies and equipment are included in the first payment. The last payment, scheduled for June, is withheld until receipt of final expenditure report. All funding is contingent upon verification of enrollment of low income children.

## **II. PROJECT GUIDELINES**

- New applicants must submit a completed Early Launch to Learning Initiative Three Year Operational Plan and ELLI Budget Statement and the forms provided by the Department of Education.
- Current ELLI awardees must submit only the parts of that plan that have been revised with clear indications of where changes have been made and an ELLI Budget Statement along with the forms provided by the Department of Education.

### **2.1 PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

- The district shall have an existing or newly established Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) or its equivalent. The purpose of the ECAC is to provide information to the district on community resources and the needs of children and families within the community. An additional purpose of the ECAC is to ensure that this initiative will not adversely affect area child care or Head Start providers. The council must include representatives from the school district **AND** child care providers, Head Start (if applicable to the district), and other community or municipal agencies interested in young children. Letters of support must be provided with the proposal that document ECAC contributions to the development of the ELLI plan and approval of the proposal.
- The ELLI program must be offered for either a 2 hour 45 minute-3 hour half day or a 6 hour full day for the entire school year.
- The district must have space to operate classes or arrangements with existing child care or Head Start agencies for collaboration. In the program application, districts may submit a plan for future expansion of the preschool program (i.e. districts may start with a small number of classrooms with a plan to increase over time).
- Children with disabilities must be included full time in the proposed general education preschool classrooms. This is beneficial for all children, in compliance with federal and state law, and offsets costs since the cost of serving children with disabilities is already in the district budget.
- Class sizes of 15 to 18 children are preferred but an absolute maximum of 20 is allowed with evidence of highly qualified teachers with preschool credentials and experience;

- Regardless of setting, each classroom must have a teacher with the appropriate Department of Education license (e.g. P-3, N-K) and a teaching assistant.
- Funding is provided for the low income children (eligible for free and reduced lunch) and there must be evidence that they will be served. Estimates of the low income population should be based on the number of 1<sup>st</sup> grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch for planning purposes, **but the actual funding will be based on actual enrollment.** In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State. Classes must consist of a mix of children with disabilities, state-funded low-income children, tuition-funded children (parent payment) or children funded by the district general fund. In other words mixed income and mixed ability classes must be offered. If children with disabilities will not be served in a particular classroom, justification must be provided. An exception to the mixed income requirement will be made for Head Start classrooms due to income eligibility requirements for this program. However, there must be other classrooms that serve mixed income children in the district.
- The proposed program must implement an approved evidence-based curriculum model and must meet the Office of Early Childhood Education's *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*. To be eligible for this award, districts must send the head of curriculum and instruction or the equivalent person to a Technical Assistance meeting on April 7, 2005 and districts that have not previously applied for ELLI funding must send an appropriate representative to a Curriculum Showcase which will be held on April 20, 2005. The district representative must pre-register by April 4, 2005. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by March 24, 2005.

Although not required, the following factors lead to more competitive proposals:

- Meeting most or all of the *Abbott Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines* which delineate higher standards;
- Collaborating with private child care or Head Start agencies to offer full-day and full-year programs (before and after school and during the summer). Or, funding child care or Head Start to upgrade their program by reducing class size, hiring certified teachers and implementing the approved preschool curriculum;
- Including innovative approaches that will meet the specific needs of children and families in the community by partnering with other agencies. Examples of such programs are preparing high school students for careers in early childhood education by assisting in the preschool classroom, implementing dual generation programs that help parents learn work place skills, or initiating a grandparent program with a local senior citizen center;
- Offering dual language programs (e.g. English-speaking children learn Spanish while Spanish speaking children learn English in a systematic and well-planned curriculum.); and



- Offering a preschool/child care program for the full school day. At least half of the day must meet the criteria for class size and teaching staff listed above and meet the *Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines*. Half-day or some half and some full-day preschool programs will be considered if the district can show that half-day more appropriately serves the needs of their community.

## 2.2 COST PROPOSAL

### Costs of Half-day Programs

For half-day programs of no less than 2 hour 45 minutes to 3 hours, the funding would cover \$3,000 for each child eligible for free or reduced lunch **who is actually enrolled in the program**. Estimates of the low income population should be based on the number of 1<sup>st</sup> grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch for planning purposes. Estimates should also be based on space and the advice of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Families over 200% of the poverty level may be assessed tuition up to the full cost. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State. Districts must determine what to charge and how to allot their own resources but all ELLI and parent generated funds must be spent on the preschool program. This per pupil amount also applies to ECPA districts applying to increase to a full-day program of at least 6 hours.

### Costs of Full-day Programs

For full-school day programs of at least 6 hours, the funding would cover tuition for children eligible for free lunch or reduced lunch who are actually enrolled in the program at \$6,000/child. Estimates of the low income population should be based on the number of 1<sup>st</sup> grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch for planning purposes. Estimates should also be based on space and the advice of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Families over 200% of the poverty level may be assessed tuition up to the full cost. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State. Districts must determine what to charge and how to allot their own resources but all ELLI and parent generated funds must be spent on the preschool program.

## ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS

Funds from this initiative may only be used to cover additional costs of the currently unserved low income four year old children. The eligible population for ELLI funds is defined as the following:

- Children who will meet the birth date cut-off for kindergarten in the subsequent school year;
- Children who meet residency requirements of the applicant district(s) (Districts may join together to offer this program); and

- Children whose families are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low income children funded by the State.

ELLI funds may be braided with other funding sources but may only be used to supplement not supplant current resources. ELLI funds may only be used for the following categories:

- Instructional salaries and benefits,
- General classroom supplies,
- Professional development for instructional staff, and
- Contracted services from private child care or Head Start agencies.

Other costs of the program should be funded through district general fund, special education funds, and parent tuition. For districts that currently serve four year old children without disabilities, the total number of children served or duration (length of day) of the program must increase with these funds. If private child-care agencies contract with the district to provide a preschool program, they may not increase their profits through student co pay or tuition payments. Tuition for the regular program day cannot be assessed to children with disabilities.

### III. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

To apply for funds under this program, each new applicant must submit a complete ELLI Three Year Operational Plan including **all excel tables** and the 2005-2006 budget worksheet. Current ELLI recipients need only to submit plan revisions (including any changes to the excel tables) and a 2005-2006 budget statement and worksheet.

Required Sections	Included
Award Proposal Title Page	
Table 1: Enrollment	
Table 2: Class Size	
Table 3: Teachers	
Overview	
Program Component Activity Forms	
Statement of Assurances	
Letters of Support	
Signed Board Resolution	
Table 4: Budget Statement	

### IV. AWARD SELECTION

#### 4.1 Distribution of Awards

In making awards under this program, NJDOE will ensure, to the extent practicable, a distribution of awards among the geographic regions of the state. Current recipients who are already implementing ELLI programs will receive first consideration for funding. Remaining funds will then be distributed among new, approved applicants.

## **4.2 Proposal Review and Scoring**

Committees consisting of DOE staff and other early childhood education experts will evaluate all eligible applications. The application is evaluated on the basis of quality, comprehensiveness and accuracy of response to the guidelines and requirements. Applicants may request information about their evaluation scores by writing to the NJDOE Application Control Center. The NJDOE reserves the right to withdraw from consideration any application that does not include each component to be evaluated and scored in the evaluation process.

Current ELLI recipients' applications will be reviewed first, then new applications will be reviewed and scored. The application must receive a score of at least 65 points out of 100 to be eligible for funding. Eligible applications are ranked and funded in descending order, from highest to lowest score, until available funds have been used.

Reviewers will use the following Scoring Rubric to evaluate applications:

### **(1) Outreach and enrollment plan**

**10 pts**

- The program will begin operation on the first day of school in September, 2004
- Effective methods of recruitment are detailed
- Methods will attract hard to reach families and indicate a commitment to serving a large proportion of low income children in mixed ability/ mixed income classes
- It is evident that the plan is based on knowledge of community needs

### **(2) District-wide planning with evidence of community partnership through the Early Childhood Advisory Council;**

**20 pts**

- The ECAC has been established and has convened **[If not, the district is ineligible.]**
- The ECAC membership reflects broad representation of stakeholders
- Collaboration with community agencies serving young children and their families is evident
- Actual contracting with community child care and Head Start agencies or collaborative arrangements to serve children for more than the regular school day is evident [Automatic 5 points.]
- Letters of support, included in the application, provide evidence of the involvement and agreement of the ECAC with the application

### **(3) Curriculum development and implementation;**

**30 pts**

- The district will implement one of the curricula introduced at the Curriculum Showcase [Automatic 10 points]

- The curriculum is comprehensive and designed to help teachers and children meet all of the *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*
- Transition plans show effective articulation and communication, preschool through grade three
- Innovative approaches for meeting children's needs are evident [see Project Requirements section above]
- Clear and evidence-based methods for meeting the language needs of children who are English language learners are described
- Teachers and other staff are highly qualified and have experience with preschool education
- Class size is no more than 20 [Automatic 5 points for class size of 15 – 18]

**(4) Professional development and training;**

**10 pts**

- The professional development plan is systematic and comprehensive
- Teaching staff will receive on-going support from knowledgeable supervisors/administrators

**(5) Inclusion;**

**15 pts**

- All classrooms will include children with disabilities [Automatic 5 points.]
- No more than one third of the children in any classroom have disabilities. [Children are served in the natural proportion that they are found in society – i.e. If 10% of the preschool population have IEPs then an average of 10% of the children in each classroom have disabilities, Automatic 5 points]
- The program is designed to provide appropriate supports for children with disabilities during the regular routine, such as adaptive activities and materials, adjusted schedules, and integrated therapies (pull out is rarely used)
- Teachers will receive consultation from special education staff and other experts (It is not necessary to have special education teachers in each classroom.)
- If children with disabilities will not be served in a particular classroom, justification must be provided.

(Please note: in order for the district to be eligible for ELLI funding, at least some of the classrooms **must** include children with disabilities for the full classroom day.)

**(6) Program evaluation;**

**10 pts**

- The program evaluation plan will result in valid information that will be useful in program development and planning for individual children
- With the exception of developmental screenings and diagnostic testing or random assessment as part of an experimental research design, no standardized testing will be administered on preschool children. Instead, performance-based assessment will be administered

**(7) Budget;**

**5 pts**

- The proposed budget uses ELLI funds only as allowed [If not, the district is not eligible.]
  - It is evident that the program will be efficient
  - Funds generated through tuition will not be used for any other program or costs
-